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# INTRODUCTION

THE Mandan are a small Siouan-speaking tribe who in 1910 numbered 197, according to the government census. In 1929 the writer collected data on lodge groups at Fishhook Village for the period 1870–72 from the information of a number of older Mandan and found that they considered forty-three households with a population of three hundred and nineteen as Mandan. Of this number, some of the individuals were Arikara, Hidatsa, and even Crow. Nevertheless, the household was considered to be Mandan because of the participation of the individuals of the household in the social and ceremonial life of the Mandan.

This study of the social and ceremonial life of the Mandan was made during a six-month visit to the Fort Berthold Reservation in 1930 and 1931. The census of lodge groups at the last village of Fishhook for both the Mandan and the Hidatsa was prepared from the data supplied by several of the older informants. Pertinent information on sacred bundles owned and offices filled by the various individuals was recorded. Genealogies were prepared from the data obtained from the census and the inheritance of bundle and other ceremonial rights. This preliminary study, made by the writer in 1929 for Beloit College and under the immediate supervision of Dr. George L. Collie, indicated that much of the aboriginal culture could be reconstructed. The Logan Museum of Beloit College conducted archeological studies of documented Mandan village sites during the period when this study was made, and native informants were especially helpful in identifying numerous traditional sites and interpreting archeological data.

While preparing the census and genealogies of the Mandan, no especial effort was made to record sacred rites. Informants offered little resistance to the recording of data on the possession of these bundles or the order of their inheritance. When the recording of the sacred myths and rites was undertaken, the writer was acquainted with all his informants. Tom Smith, who

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served as interpreter, was exceedingly helpful in planning the study of the ceremonies. Resistance to the divulging of sacred lore was anticipated. He indicated those who would be least likely to co-operate. Work was begun with Christianized informants. Before recording a ceremony, additional information on the household not brought out in recording the census was obtained. Employing genealogies based on household groups, it

FIG. 3.—Dance of the Goose Society

was possible in nearly every instance to determine both the former villages at Fort Clark and the older villages near Heart River of which the older people of the households were descendants. This information was important in determining cultural differences between the old villages.

The writer used fourteen informants for this study; eleven of these were Mandan and three were Hidatsa of the Awaxawi band. The six Mandan male informants were White Calf, Crows Heart, Ben Benson, Bear on the Flat, Foolish Woman, and Little Owl. The female informants were Scattercorn, Mrs. Good Bear, Calf Woman, Mrs. Owen Baker, and Front Woman. Wolf Chief and Mrs. White Duck supplied information on the Okipa and Corn ceremonies that had reached them through intermar-